

In 2022, the All England Club, Wimbledon's organising body, changed their strict all-white dress code for the first time in the tournament's nearly 150 years of history, thus allowing female players to wear dark-coloured undershorts as of 2023. In 2022 and 2023, the England women's football team switched to blue shorts from white, and some English football clubs, such as West Bromwich Albion and Manchester City, have transitioned to dark shorts for their female teams. These changes were triggered by concerns raised by athletes about the possibility of staining clothing or leaking blood during menstruation. In the case of Wimbledon, they have also been supported by menstrual activists who protested during the tournament in 2022. Moreover, some sportswomen have spoken openly about the influence of menstruation on their performance, which has attracted considerable media attention in the last few years. Amongst these one can indicate the Chinese player Qinwen Zheng, who attributed her loss against Iga Świątek in the fourth round of the French Open 2022 to 'the girls' things'.

As the aforementioned examples demonstrate, menstruation in sports is becoming a topic of public debate, as it is in other areas of social life. At the same time, studies have demonstrated that female athletes rarely speak with their coaches about menstruation and that in sport it also remains to some extent a taboo both in sport environments and in communication with fans. The current analyses of menstruation in professional sport derive mainly from sport science that rarely accounts for sociocultural factors. Meanwhile, perceptions of menstruation and menstruation management are shaped not only by the characteristics of sport and being an athlete but also by a broader sociocultural context and being a woman (both inside and outside sport). For that reason, menstruation management should also be analysed from a sociological perspective.

This project aims to examine how menstruation is managed by menstruating and participating female athletes, coaching staff, clubs and sports associations. The project distinguishes between four dimensions of menstruation management: (1) individual practices, (2) communication between female athletes and members of the coaching staff and physicians, (3) communication addressed to fans and (4) policies and support offered by clubs and sport federations. The project will be focused on five sport disciplines: athletics (running), swimming, judo, skiing and volleyball, however some data will also refer to other sports. Diverse disciplines, research methods and categories of respondents will allow us to obtain a simultaneously multidimensional and nuanced picture of the analysed phenomenon. The project will contribute to the development of selected sociological sub-disciplines (sociology of sport, sociology of body, and sociology of gender) and (critical) menstruation studies but may also contribute to increasing support for female athletes and mitigating the menstrual taboo.